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Viewing cable 09ISLAMABAD1438, NSA JONES' JUNE 25 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ZARDARI

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09ISLAMABAD1438	2009-06-30 10:45	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Islamabad

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/the-india-cables/article2035588.ece>

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 001438

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NSA JONES' JUNE 25 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ZARDARI

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In their June 25 meeting in Islamabad, National Security Advisor General James Jones and President Zardari discussed: Pakistan's military offensive against extremists; GOP capacity to fight terrorism; the nature of extremism in Pakistan; drones; Iran; Afghanistan; Zardari's conversation with Indian PM Singh in Russia; and the positive trend of U. S. Pakistan relations.
End Summary.

¶2. (C) National Security Advisor General James Jones, Ambassador, and delegation from the National Security Council met President Zardari and a GOP delegation at the Presidency on June 25. Pakistan's military campaign in Malakand and Waziristan had been positively noted in the U.S., said Jones, which welcomed the display of resolve. The trendline in relations between the U.S. and Pakistan was positive, said Jones. Zardari rejoined that the most important component of the relationship was the goodwill expressed by the USG toward Pakistan; his own tenure in office (ten months) was short and his popularity not high, but goodwill from America was central to his and Pakistan's future.

¶3. (C) Pakistan was united, said Zardari: the people have the will to support the military in its campaign to stop the taliban/extremists operating in the country. He cautioned that the fight against militant extremism would be a long one, lasting not months but many, many years and that lack of vigilance on the GOP's part would be devastating. As confident as he was of the military's resolve -- this time -- to fight Pakistani militancy, he was equally convinced that any failure to maintain pressure on the militants after showing such resolve would have grave consequences.

¶4. (S) President Zardari thanked the U.S. for its assistance while stating he needed "a battalion of helicopters" to fight the extremists now, and in the future. He also made repeated pleas for drones to be "put in Pakistan's hands" so that Pakistan would own the issue and drone attacks (including collateral damage) would not provoke anti-americanism. Zardari said the technology behind them was not cutting-edge and said he has raised the issue with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

¶5. (C) Journalist Bob Woodward (traveling with the NSA Jones delegation) joined the meeting later and asked Zardari why he had sharpened his attack on the extremists in the last six months. "Organization," replied Zardari, who noted he had been in office a short time and had used the first four months to prepare. Pointing to the death of his father-in-law Zulfikar Bhutto and assassination of his wife, Benazir, Zardari said he had been confronting extremism (or the ideology from which it was birthed) for more than thirty years. His wife had been targeted for assassination as early as 1988, when she was viewed as a symbol of feminism and all that it represented. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) of which he was the head (like the Bhuttos before him) had always been ousted from power by the military, said Zardari, which previously had been aligned with fundamentalism.

¶6. (C) Jones asked Zardari how he viewed relations in the region and told Zardari President Obama's own policy toward Iran would have to be reexamined given events unfolding there. Whatever had happened during the election, Iranian leadership could not pretend nothing had occurred and return as if there had been no shift.

¶7. (C) Zardari noted that several tri-lateral forums had been created in the region with the ostensible purpose of supporting Afghanistan. He counseled that the USG must "cooperate with Turkey, and Iran," acknowledging at the same time that the GOP too was perplexed and disappointed by what had happened in Iran. As to Afghanistan, he said all countries had to be encouraged -- even if (as in the case of Russia), only to be urged not to meddle. Zardari accused India of providing the precursor chemicals necessary to produce heroine, which he said was funding the taliban in Afghanistan.

¶8. (C) Asked by NSA Jones, what was the best that could be hoped for in Afghanistan, Zardari spoke of substituting hybrid corn for poppies, even if at a subsidized price, to

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wean farmers from the opium trade. He said China might be interested or persuaded to invest in the venture. Zardari's vision was to use that corn for ethanol production; he welcomed the indication of interest shown by National Geographic CEO John Fahey, and invited him to return to Pakistan for a briefing on the concept.

¶9. (C) More broadly, Zardari praised the industriousness of the Pashtun people. Currently they were "very good warriors," but they were also natural entrepreneurs and the hardest working people of Pakistan. If their entrepreneurial power could be unleashed, the problems "in the Pashtun belt" would largely be resolved.

¶10. (C) Over the medium term, Pakistan had to build its economy so that it could pay its own expenses to combat extremism, added Zardari, who thought this possible if exports could be increased three-fold. (He said he would raise the issue with National Security Council Senior Director Lipton in his upcoming visit to Pakistan.) He thanked the USG for all it was doing to aid Pakistan and asked for more financial assistance.

¶11. (C) Zardari signaled that there had been some progress in his talks with Indian PM Singh in Russia, even though he had noted earlier that India's military capacity was ten-fold Pakistan's. He regretted not being able to meet Singh at the upcoming Sharm el-Sheikh summit but, he said, "unfortunately, PM Gilani had already announced he would be going to Sharm" (sic). In his meeting with Singh, said Zardari, he had underscored that "there could not be a better political moment" to improve relations across the board. India was a mature democracy and an ancient nation, said Zardari. "Singh is an excellent economist," he said, but Zardari was not convinced the Indian Prime Minister understood the constraints under which Zardari was operating. Helping Singh to understand them was of import, hinted Zardari. NSC Senior Director Don Camp said the Indian perspective was to question GOP activism and to ask what it had done to quash terrorist organizations. NSA Jones reminded Zardari how important it was to ensure there was not another Mumbai-style attack. Zardari reiterated that Singh was unaware of what it took to "change the mind-set of Pakistan's "establishment," given Pakistan's short history of fragile democratic regimes toppled by the military.

¶12. (U) NSA Jones has cleared this cable.

PATTERSON